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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELMOPAN 000111

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y. ADDED CLASSIFICATION MARKING
TO PARA 5.

FOR WHA/CEN - R. BEAL
EMBASSIES ALSO FOR LEGATT, DEA, REGIONAL AFFAIRS, USMS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [MASS](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [BH](#)

SUBJECT: BELIZE: INITIAL MEETING WITH NATIONAL SECURITY
MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Robert Dieter for reason 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador's initial meeting with National Security Minister Perdomo and his deputy was encouraging. Perdomo recognizes that there are serious problems to be addressed in law enforcement and is interested in cooperating more closely with us on improving the effectiveness of the police. Cooperation with the Coast Guard and the Defense Force, already good, should continue to improve as well. END COMMENT.

12. (C) Ambassador and DCM had lunch February 21 with the new Minister for National Security, Carlos Perdomo, and the Ministry's Chief Executive Officer (Deputy Minister equivalent) Brigadier General Lloyd Gillett. The new government has combined the previous government's ministries of Defense and Home Affairs, giving Perdomo authority over the Police, Defense Force, Coast Guard, the prison and Immigration.

13. (C) Perdomo's main focus during our conversation was on improving law enforcement, particularly the police force. He wants to integrate social service agencies into the criminal justice system to a much greater degree and provide alternatives to prison, particularly for young offenders. He was appreciative of U.S. assistance to the Coast Guard and the military and is open to working with us on ways to improve. He discussed initiatives to create a special court to deal with gang/gun issues, to tighten up border security at entry points.

14. (C) On counter-narcotics cooperation, which has been a frustrating issue for us over the last few years, Perdomo is saying the right things. He recounted the close working relationship he had with the DEA Country Attache when he was in government before. He readily agreed to the Ambassador's offer for early briefings by DEA and RSO on their perceptions of how law enforcement, particularly counter-narcotics, can be improved and made more effective. He seems open to ideas and assistance from the USG -- he mentioned USG help in polygraphing police officers -- to help clean up problems of corruption in the police force (ref B). We should explore all options to assist on this.

15. (C) COMMENT: With an experienced Minister and an effective

and well-respected CEO, National Security appears so far to be the ministry in the Barrow government most likely to be organized quickly and efficiently. We expect continued good cooperation with the BDF and the Coast Guard under the new government, and we are hopeful that there can be more joint work done with the police and in particular the Anti-Drug Unit to enhance counter-narcotics cooperation. CEO Gillett is familiar with the Merida Initiative and other sources of USG security assistance, and we expect him to be more proactive in developing proposals for Merida funding than the previous government was. It is interesting that Perdomo did not raise the issue of wireless intercept capability brought up by PM Barrow at his initial meeting with the Ambassador.

END COMMENT.

16. (C) Bio note: Perdomo. The Minister is one of the relatively few experienced members of Dean Barrow's Cabinet. An educator and school administrator by profession, he served in the last UDP government in a number of high-level positions including as the senior public servant in the Ministry of National Security. Perdomo studied in Denver, Colorado, as an undergraduate and received a master's degree in Canada. He is approachable and used to working with U.S. officials.

17. (C) Bio note: Gillett. Lloyd Gillett is currently Commander of the Belize Defense Force. His contract as CEO of the Ministry begins February 25, although his official retirement date from the BDF is not, he said, until May 2. Gillett has worked closely with U.S. military and civilian personnel and has an excellent reputation for effectiveness and integrity.

DIETER